



Foster, C., Shilton, T., Westerman, L., Varney, J., & Bull, F. (2018). World Health Organisation to develop global action plan to promote physical activity: Time for action. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 52(8), 484-485. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2017-098070>

Peer reviewed version

Link to published version (if available):  
[10.1136/bjsports-2017-098070](https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2017-098070)

[Link to publication record in Explore Bristol Research](#)  
PDF-document

This is the author accepted manuscript (AAM). The final published version (version of record) is available online via BMJ at <http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/early/2017/07/19/bjsports-2017-098070>. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

## University of Bristol - Explore Bristol Research

### General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:  
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/ebr-terms/>

## World Health Organisation to develop Global Action Plan to Promote Physical Activity – Time for Action

Correspondence to:

Dr Charlie Foster, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford,  
UK

[charlie.foster@dph.ox.ac.uk](mailto:charlie.foster@dph.ox.ac.uk)

Co authors:

Charlie Foster<sup>1</sup>

Trevor Shilton<sup>2</sup>

Lucy Westerman<sup>3</sup>

Justin Varney<sup>4</sup>

Fiona Bull<sup>5</sup>

1. Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, UK & President of International Society of Physical Activity and Health (2016-2018), [www.ispah.org](http://www.ispah.org)
2. National Heart Foundation, Perth, Western Australia, Australia & Global Advocacy for Physical Activity (GAPA), [www.globalpa.org.uk](http://www.globalpa.org.uk)
3. NCD Alliance, Geneva, Switzerland, [www.ncdalliance.org](http://www.ncdalliance.org)
4. Healthy People Division, Public Health England, UK,
5. Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, World Health Organisation, Geneva, Switzerland, Past President of ISPAH (2014-2016) [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

Coinciding with the World Health Organization's 70<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly in Geneva (22-31 May), the WHO has launched the process to develop a new Global Action Plan to Promote Physical Activity [1]. This development could not come at a more critical time for global health.

The Assembly heard that progress on reducing the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) is significantly off track, and the target to reduce physical inactivity, a key risk factor for NCDs, is far from being achieved. With physical inactivity a rising global concern from Europe, North and South America, to Asia, Australasia and increasingly Africa [2], the development of a new Global Action Plan should be welcomed by physical activity advocates, practitioners, policy makers and scientists everywhere. The Global Action Plan is a new opportunity to enable a step change in the approach to using evidence-based policy across geographies, environments and communities and different populations.

This moment matters to the physical activity and health community. It reflects years of advocacy and campaigning, and is a testament to an increase in volume and quality of research into basic, clinical and applied sciences of physical activity and

health. The growth of the evidence now demonstrates the potential to gain across multiple sectors, from exercise medicine and sport to social care, dance to dementia prevention, and economic regeneration to urban planning.

While this evidence base has grown, broader policy priorities have emerged which have highlighted the pivotal role of physical activity in achieving the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [3], making the new Global Action Plan to Promote Physical Activity a catalytic opportunity across multiple sectors and providing a framework for a truly embedded whole system approach to moving nations.

The Bangkok Declaration on Physical Activity and Health (BKKD) is a consensus statement from the 2016 International Society for Physical Activity and Health Congress, which provides a strong foundation for this approach [3]. It was developed in partnership with congress delegates from over 82 countries and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. As an advocacy tool for investment and actions at country, regional and global levels, the BKKD provides a clear case for partnerships with sectors inside and outside of health aligned with the SDGs (Figure 1).

The BKKD details six specific actions which, if implemented in all countries, would advance progress toward achieving the WHO target of decreasing levels of physical inactivity by 10% by 2025, and contribute to reducing NCD prevalence, burden and premature mortality [4]. The actions, if implemented, would also contribute to mitigating climate change, reducing inequalities and supporting more sustainable cities and communities in a rapidly urbanising world.

An inactive world is unhealthier, uneconomic and unsustainable. ISPA has been leading the push for greater recognition of the positive contribution of physical activity for health, and social and sustainable development. In support of WHO's *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health* (2004) [5] and the WHO's *Global Action Plan on NCDs 2013-2020* [6], ISPAH developed a policy framework (the Toronto Charter, 2010)[7] and policy investment decision tool (*What Works: The Seven Best Investments for Physical Activity*, 2011) [8] to support countries with the rationale and operational choices for physical activity promotion. Despite their widespread use by countries in their development of national policy on physical activity, there remains a significant challenge in gaining the high level commitment and resourcing required for full and sustained implementation of policy actions.

Physical activity promotion matters not only for today, but also for the sustainability and health of future generations. The challenge to member state governments, civil society and funding agencies lies in improving the effectiveness and scale of implementation of physical activity programmes. Consequently, ISPAH wishes to also raise attention to known effective actions to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviours. With the support of BJSM and the ISPAH members we plan to feature these actions through the BJSM Bright Spots and ISPAH Bright Spots/Highlights submissions.

Years of advocacy have culminated in the opportunity of the Global Action Plan to Promote Physical Activity. Yet, for it to achieve its objectives, fill existing global policy gaps, operationalise other global commitments, and have maximum local impact, it will require widespread engagement in the development process from diverse stakeholders. The Global Action Plan to Promote Physical Activity where appropriate can act as a catalyst for generating national actions, high-level commitment and resources. It could even act as a yardstick to evaluate national plans for physical activity promotion.

## **A Call to Action**

The development and robust implementation of the World Health Organisation's Global Action Plan to Promote Physical Activity will, in many ways, shape the future. Our roles as practitioners, researchers, scientists, and practitioners, ideally positions us as key advocates who can positively influence that future and its sustainability, at both national and global levels across a range of sectors. We encourage you to read, share and utilise the suite of ISPAH resources, especially the Bangkok Declaration in your practice, teachings and advocacy. Specifically we call on readers to share the Bangkok Declaration widely, through Twitter, Facebook, other social media and your networks. The more engaged we all are, the healthier our planet, ourselves and our children will be.

View more on the BKKD and ISPAH at <http://www.ispah.org/resources>

Word Count: 827

### **Competing Interests**

All authors were involved in developing and promoting the BKKD

The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed in this article and they do not necessarily represent the views, decisions or policies of the institutions with which they are affiliated.

### **References**

1. World Health Organization Governance: Development of a draft global action plan to promote physical activity [Internet]. Geneva: {cited 2017 May 14}. Available from [http://www.who.int/ncds/governance/physical\\_activity\\_plan/en/](http://www.who.int/ncds/governance/physical_activity_plan/en/)
2. Reis R, Salvo D, Ogilvie D, Lambert E, Goenka S, Brownson R. Scaling up physical activity interventions worldwide: stepping up to larger and smarter approaches to get people moving. *Lancet*. 2016;388(10051):1337-48.
3. United Nations [Internet]. New York. UN General Assembly resolution. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sept. A/69/L.85. 2015. [cited 2017 May 14] Available from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

4. International Society for Physical Activity and Health. The Bangkok Declaration on Physical Activity for Global Health and Sustainable Development. Bangkok: ISPAH; 2017 [cited 2017 May 14]. Available from: <http://www.ispah.org/resources>
5. World Health Organization [Internet]. Geneva. Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. World Health Organization; 2004. [cited 2017 May 14]. Available from: <http://www.who.int/nmh/ncd-tools/target1/en/>
6. World Health Organization [Internet]. Geneva. Global NCD Action Plan 2013–2020. World Health Organization; 2013. [cited 2017 May 14]. Available from: <http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd-action-plan/en/>
7. Bull F, Gauvin L, Bauman A, Shilton T, Kohl H, Salmon A. The Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: a global call for action. 2010;7(4):421-2.
8. Global Advocacy for Physical Activity (GAPA) the Advocacy Council of the International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH). NCD Prevention: Investments that Work for Physical Activity. Br J Sports Med. 2012;46:709–712.

INSERT

Figure 1      Actions on physical activity can contribute to achieving eight of the sustainable development goals